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President's actions find support on Capitol Hill

By Jennifer Spevacek and Damon Thompson
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Republican and Democratic lawmakers yesterday praised President Reagan's appointment of Frank Carlucci as his new national security adviser and his administration's call for an independent counsel to investigate the Iran arms deal.

But many lawmakers continued to press for more resignations at the White House and pledged to continue a vigorous congressional investigation into the arms sale, through which $10 million to $30 million in proceeds was diverted to the Nicaraguan resistance.

"The president has certainly taken good steps," Senate Minority Leader Robert Byrd said after the president's announcement. But the West Virginia Democrat reiterated earlier pleas that Mr. Reagan "clean house" by asking for the resignations of any aides who knew of the controversial arms sale.

"The president knows who was in a position to know," Mr. Byrd said.

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Richard Lugar, Indiana Republican, said the president should fire CIA Director William Casey and White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan.

"It seems to me the entirety of the staff ought to be under review," Mr. Lugar said.

But Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole said he saw no reason for more resignations at the White House. The Kansas Republican and other GOP congressional leaders conferred with the president yesterday.

Rep. Dick Cheney of Wyoming, who served as former President Gerald Ford's chief of staff, said he has "enormous sympathy" for the president's top aide.

"I think Don Regan, on balance, has done a good job," Mr. Cheney said. "In the midst of this controversy, he's going to have to take a lot of heat. That goes with the turf."

Mr. Dole said Mr. Reagan, by supporting the call for an independent counsel and appointing a board to review operations of the National Security Council, has fulfilled congressional requests of recent days.

"We're the ones out here saying he ought to do all these things. Well, he's done it now. My view is he's come a long way," Mr. Dole said. "I'd say the next move is up to Congress.

"The president made it very clear to us that he knew nothing about the transfer of funds, and I think we all believe the president, obviously, and we want to get this behind us," Mr. Dole said.

Mr. Dole yesterday repeated his earlier statement that Congress should be recalled immediately for a special session to create a select committee to investigate the arms deals. Some Democrats have dismissed the proposal as unnecessary, but others agreed that the widening congressional investigation should be consolidated.

"We've got about 12 committees up here already, chomping at the bit," Mr. Dole said. "They can hardly wait to get started. We understand there's some infighting going on — who's going to be first, who's going to be on this committee and that committee. We want to do it right and we want to get it behind us."

Mr. Byrd said he favored the creation of a select Senate committee to investigate the Iran dealings but said the creation of that committee should be postponed until Congress reconvenes Jan 6.

Reports circulated yesterday that Sen. Dale Bumpers of Arkansas and Sen. Daniel Inouye of Hawaii, both Democrats, were in line to chair a select committee. But a Bumpers aide said there was "no truth" to the rumor, and a Senate source said members and chairmen would not be chosen "at least until the Senate Intelligence Committee finishes its investigation."

Mr. Byrd said he has had "a good many senators call me and ask to be on it."

"If you ask Mr. Dole, he has a plethora of senators who want to get on that committee from the Republican side," Mr. Byrd said.

Mr. Byrd rejected the idea of a joint select committee with the House. "The last joint investigative committee that I know anything about was following Pearl Harbor," he said.

Other lawmakers said Mr. Reagan has yet to calm congressional concerns over the 3-week-old controversy.

House Majority Leader Jim Wright said it is clear that administration officials under Mr. Reagan broke one law and may have broken at least two others. The Texas Democrat said Congress should investigate the alleged violations.

While praising the request for an independent counsel, Mr. Wright said further questions need to be addressed by the administration.

"Whether the president was involved directly or indirectly in giving the go-ahead to these activities is a question that has to be answered," Mr. Wright said.

Sen. Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island, the Democrat in line to become chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said: "Many of us in Congress have thought such measures are long overdue."

Rep. Don Edwards, California Democrat, urged that the independent counsel's inquiry be left "wide open" so the counsel could also probe other allegations of illegal administration support of the anti-Sandinista rebels.

"Any attempt to confine the scope of the independent counsel just to those who set up the Swiss bank accounts, who were involved in the arms transfers and who knew of the operations would be inadequate and unacceptable," said Mr. Edwards.

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